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SOURCE Novaya Albaniya (New Albania), by N. Shmelev.

INTRODUCTION OF SOVIET KOLKHOZES IN ALBANIA

In the winter of 1946 - 1947, the first seven agricultural cooperatives were organized in Albania.

One of the seven was organized at the village of Maminas, near the twenty-second kilometer stone on the Tirana-Durres road. Of 47 farms in the village, 37 joined the collective at its initiation. These were the farms of poor peasants who had owned little or no land in the past and had worked like slaves on the land of Ramazan Aga, the local landlord. The cooperative was named the Sickle and Hammer (Draper e Cekan). The total area included in the cooperative was 140 hectares. The cooperative had 20 yoke of oxen and an insufficient quantity of implements. The government turned over two of Ramazan Aga's houses to the cooperative, one for the management, the other for living quarters. The state also gave the cooperative several head of cattle and implements. The state MTS worked the greater part of the arable land.

Advanced methods of agriculture were applied from the beginning. For a while, lack of personal responsibility was a common fault. The kulaks predicted ruin for the cooperative and persuaded some of the peasants to return to individual farming. But lack of individual responsibility was soon ended by applying the Soviet principle: to each according to his work. Another difficulty was the Moslem idea that women were not equal to men. Now a woman's work in a cooperative is considered equal to a man's. Women's brigades have been formed and equal the men's brigades in competitions.

The first agricultural year proved the advantages of the collective system to the peasants. In 3 years (by the beginning of 1950) the yield was tripled.

Up to 1950, cooperative members have built new irrigating ditches and extended the length of the central canal to 1,700 meters. Seeding and threshing are no longer done by hand, but by machine. The cooperative now has mowers, threshers, sorting machines, mechanical rakes, and other modern implements. It has its own machine shop. The number of cattle has increased 1½ times during this period.

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By 1949, the cooperative had built seven new living quarters, and it owned storage houses, orchards, vineyards, and apiaries. In 1949, the pay for each working day was at the rate of 6 kilograms of wheat plus a considerable sum from cooperative sales of cotton, barley, and garden produce. In addition, cooperative members received a good income from the land and cattle, for their personal use.

Mammas village now (1950) has its own school, built and equipped by the cooperative. Not long ago, no members of the cooperative could read and write; now about 100 peasants are literate.

The government awarded the Sickle and Hammer cooperative the Order of Labor.

The cooperative movement is spreading. In 1947, there were already 21 agricultural cooperatives in Albania.

The government provides credit for the purchase of machines and fertilizers. Taxes in money on cooperatives have been reduced one half; taxes in kind, 10 percent. The credit allowed for agricultural cooperatives was 3.4 million leks in 1947, 8.1 million in 1948, and 13 million in 1949. Kindergartens were organized in cooperative areas so that the women could be free from part of the household work.

Still the cooperative movement was slow. Not all cooperatives were as successful as the Sickle and Hammer, the Poloske, and the 29 Nendori. Work and distribution of goods on hand were not well organized. Discipline was poor. Many preferred to work for their own advancement. The government had to take steps to eradicate these shortcomings. A group of Albanian peasants was sent to the USSR in September 1949 to visit kolkhozes in Georgia, Azerbaijan, North Ossetia, and Moscow Oblast. A second peasant delegation was sent to the USSR in 1950 to visit kolkhozes, sovkhoses, higher agricultural institutes, scientific research institutes, and MTS. On their return to Albania, these peasants gave talks on Soviet methods of obtaining high yields from their fields and improvements in their livestock.

Soviet methods are spreading, as is shown by the fact that in the fall of 1950 there were 59 agricultural cooperatives, including 2,500 families. In November 1950, the Ministry of Agriculture, on request of the peasants, approved the formation of 31 more cooperatives, bringing the total number of agricultural cooperatives in Albania to 90.

The area planted with industrial crops has sharply increased. In 1949, for example, more than 15,000 hectares were planted in cotton. The number of olive trees has also risen greatly.

In 1950, the government allotted credits amounting to 25 million leks to peasants. The state also supplied them with selected seeds, chemical fertilizers, and farm tools. Under the present regime, 859 kilometers of irrigation and drainage canals have been built.

Before the war, there were only four tractors in Albania; by 1950, there were 10 MTS with hundreds of tractors and other farm machinery. The MTS does most of the work on the fields of cooperatives. Individual peasants are discovering that use of the MTS greatly increases the yield, and are becoming accustomed to collective work.

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By 1950, state farms, following the pattern of the Soviet sovkhoz, managed about 20,000 hectares. Some of these farms provide the cities with meat, bread, milk, and fats; others produce selected seed, pedigreed cattle, and seedlings of fruit trees for distribution in the neighboring regions.

One such farm near Maminas employs 250 workers. They plant wheat, cotton, castor oil plants, potatoes, and other vegetables. The farm also specializes in breeding pedigreed cows and sheep.

Another state farm near Vurk [unidentified], applies the Michurin and Lysenko methods in the raising of improved cotton, fruit trees, and tomatoes. The farm has a nursery for fruit trees, including apple, pear, quince, fig, plum, hazelnut, and almond trees, as well as decorative trees. This farm also has a practical school for agricultural techniques and agronomy.

In the spring of 1950, the Experimental Agricultural Station of Albania received from the USSR the best quality of various seeds, including wheat, rice, cotton, soy, citrus, and other seeds. Part of the seeds were delivered to the state farms, where they produced excellent results. For example, two good crops of rice per year have been produced.

The Two-Year Plan (1949 - 1950) provided for an increase in arable land to 357,000 hectares, including 245,500 hectares planted in wheat, 63,000 hectares in fodder, more than 33,000 hectares in industrial crops, and 15,000 hectares in vegetables. It provided also for an increase in the number of draft and breeding cattle to 25,000, and of smaller livestock to 14,000.

The plan included an increase in the number of fruit trees to 1,135, and an increase in the area used for reforestation to 1,370 hectares.

Despite the dry summer of 1950, the Albanians produced good crops. For example, they fulfilled the state demands ahead of schedule, thus providing Albania, which in prewar days had to import 2,000-3,000 tons of bread per year, with its own bread.

In earlier times, the Albanians subsisted almost entirely on corn, rye, oats, and barley. Now corn is planted on less than half the available ground, while the areas planted in wheat, rice, industrial crops, and olives are considerably increased.

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